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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 683  
By Cohen

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend the University of  
Memphis Men's Basketball Team and Head  
Coach John Calipari on winning the 2002  
National Invitational Tournament (NIT)  
Championship.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause in its deliberations to recognize those outstanding teams that display discipline and diligence while attaining excellence in the realm of athletics; and

WHEREAS, one such noteworthy team is the University of Memphis Men's Basketball Team, which recently completed another stellar season by capturing the 2002 NIT Championship in an exciting victory over the University of South Carolina; and

WHEREAS, with an impressive record of twenty-seven victories against only nine losses, the Tigers posted the school's most victories since 1986 and earned the Conference USA National Division Title with a stellar conference record of 12-4; and

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WHEREAS, Memphis, en route to its second consecutive winning season, defeated several of the premier programs in college basketball, including the University of Louisville led by Head Coach Rick Pitino; and

WHEREAS, in a showdown between these two storied rivals and, former Metro Conference rivals, which featured coaches who have followed similar paths in achieving great success in the college ranks and in the NBA, the Tigers edged the Cardinals 80-70 in front of a capacity crowd at the Pyramid; and

WHEREAS, in addition to defeating the Cardinals, the Tigers bested talented teams in defeating in-state rival University of Tennessee Volunteers, and traditional Atlantic Ten power Temple University, the latter in a nationally televised game in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, after suffering a heartbreaking one-point overtime loss to fourth-ranked Cincinnati, which cost them the Conference Championship and a probable NCAA Tournament bid, in the season finale, Memphis gained a berth in the 2002 National Invitational Tournament; and

WHEREAS, the Tigers were victorious in their first two NIT games, earning victories over the University of North Carolina-Greensboro and Brigham Young University to earn inclusion in the NIT Elite Eight; and

WHEREAS, in the Elite Eight, Memphis was matched against in-state foe and fellow Board of Regents school, the Tennessee Tech Golden Eagles; and

WHEREAS, despite a valiant effort by the Golden Eagles, Memphis prevailed 79-73 in a closely fought battle, with DaJuan Wagner leading the team down the stretch; this tremendous victory propelled the Tigers into the NIT Final Four for the second consecutive year; and

WHEREAS, playing in the historic and legendary Madison Square Garden, Memphis was paired in a rematch against Temple University in the semifinal game; in the closing moments of the game, DeJuan Wagner had a key assist when he passed the ball to Kelley

Wise for the game-winning dunk, and the Tigers defeated a determined Temple team 78-77; and

WHEREAS, led by DeJuan Wagner's 32 points and seven assists, Memphis advanced against Temple to the NIT Championship to face former Metro Conference rival, the University of South Carolina Gamecocks; and

WHEREAS, behind the phenomenal first-half shooting of Earl Barron, the Tigers defeated the Gamecocks 72-62, capturing the NIT Championship and the school's first-ever National Varsity Sports Championship; and

WHEREAS, the University of Memphis Tigers' Basketball Team is composed of gifted athletes, several of whom have earned individual honors for their outstanding performances; and

WHEREAS, DeJuan Wagner is one such noteworthy Tiger; he has earned numerous distinctions for his all-around great play, including being named First Team All-Conference USA, Freshmen Team All-Conference USA, C-USA Freshman of the Year, NIT All-Tournament Team, Most Valuable Player of the NIT, *The Sporting News* All-Freshmen Team and All-American Honorable Mention; and

WHEREAS, in addition to these remarkable accomplishments, DeJuan Wagner averaged 21 points per game and set a school record for most points scored in a season with 762; and

WHEREAS, Kelly Wise, a Senior, also earned several honors for his meritorious service to the team, including being named First Team All-Conference USA; in addition, to this achievement, Kelly Wise averaged a double-double for the season with 11 points and 10 rebounds per game and ended his collegiate career as C-USA's all-time leader in double-doubles; and

WHEREAS, an outstanding basketball player, Kelly Wise scored over 1,000 points and garnered over 1,000 rebounds in a Tiger uniform; he ranks as seventh all-time in scoring in school history, third in rebounding and fourth in blocked shots; and

WHEREAS, Chris Massie was another Tiger who contributed greatly to the team's success as he averaged 9.8 points and 8.8 rebounds per game; during a six-game span in which Kelly Wise was injured, Chris played extremely well, averaging a double-double in those games; and

WHEREAS, Earl Barron, a NIT All-Tournament Team selection, assisted greatly in the Tigers' championship effort as he hit his first nine shots and scored 25 points, 19 of them in the first half, in the sensational championship victory over South Carolina; Earl averaged 9.2 points per game for the season; and

WHEREAS, another crucial factor in Memphis' success was the play of point guard Antonio Burks who developed into a phenomenal playmaker; he scored a season high 26 points and almost single-handedly defeated the University of South Florida Bulls; and

WHEREAS, the guard tandem of Freshmen Scooter McFadgon and Anthony Rice provided a tremendous spark for the Tigers' offense; Scooter McFadgon averaged 9.9 points per game and shot 37.2 percent from three-point range and a phenomenal 85.5 percent from the free-throw line; and

WHEREAS, Anthony Rice's 42.5 percent shooting from three-point range contributed greatly to the Tigers' potency from behind the arc; in one of his best games of the season, Anthony corralled ten rebounds against South Carolina in the NIT Championship; and

WHEREAS, the Tigers pride themselves on teamwork, each player placing the needs of the team above individual honors and personal concerns; and

WHEREAS, the outstanding members of this team are Senior, Kelly Wise; Juniors, Chris Massie and Earl Barron; Sophomores, Antonio Burks, Arthur Barclay, Modibo Diarra and

Nathaniel Root; and Freshmen, DeJuan Wagner, Scooter McFadgon, Duane Erwin and Anthony Rice; and

WHEREAS, the Memphis Men's Basketball Team has been inspired to greater heights by an outstanding coaching staff led by Head Coach John Calipari; and

WHEREAS, in his two seasons at Memphis, Coach Calipari has won 48 games and a C-USA National Division Title; and

WHEREAS, a former head coach in the NBA, Coach John Calipari has led Memphis to the NIT Final Four twice in two years, earning the NIT Championship this season; and

WHEREAS, one of the most highly respected and successful coaches in basketball, John Calipari built an outstanding reputation at the University of Massachusetts; as coach of the Minutemen, John Calipari transformed a struggling program into a national power, earning five straight Atlantic Ten Conference titles and seven post-season berths, including a trip to the NCAA Final Four and the NCAA Championship game in the same season; and

WHEREAS, Coach Calipari is supported by an excellent staff, which includes Assistant Coaches Tony Barbee, Steve Roccaforte, and Derek Kellogg; and

WHEREAS, throughout the season, the Tigers enjoyed the enthusiastic support of the administration, faculty, staff, students, and fans of the University of Memphis; and

WHEREAS, a team that refused to give up, the Tigers' fearless and passionate play earned the respect of opposing coaches and players alike; and

WHEREAS, the athletic excellence attained by this phenomenal basketball program is a tribute to the hard work and dedication of coaches and players alike and deserves special recognition; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we honor and commend the University of Memphis Men's Basketball Team and Head Coach John Calipari on the completion of yet another outstanding season,

congratulate them upon winning the 2002 National Invitational Tournament Championship and the school's first ever National Varsity Championship, and wish them well in all their future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.